



# *the* Oak Hickory

## LINN COUNTY CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

December 2022



LinnCountyIowa.gov/Conservation

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The Oak Hickory News is published three times each year by the Linn County Conservation Department.

## Outdoor Leadership Through Experience

Backpacking trip proves to be rewarding for students

BY KENT RECTOR, NATURE CENTER MANAGER  
AT WICKIUP HILL LEARNING CENTER

This past July, eight students from four different school districts ventured to southwest Colorado for our first-ever Wilderness Trek program. The Trek is a new and innovative Linn County Conservation education program designed to create a multicultural community of outdoor recreationists and leaders through wilderness exploration, challenge, discovery, and personal growth. The primary goal of this program is to offer safe, equitable access to a backcountry wilderness experience that develops outdoor leadership and recreation skills for all Linn County youth.

Students hiked about five miles a day on average. These students camped out of their backpacks for five nights and six days. They slept above the tree line, got rained on, and even celebrated a birthday.

>> [Learn more on page 5](#)



Black Bellied Whistling  
Ducks at Wanatee Park

## Bonds Helping Fund Natural Resource and Quality of Life Initiatives

— BY DENNIS GOEMAAT, LINN COUNTY CONSERVATION —

Linn County residents showed strong support for water quality initiatives, natural resource protections, and expanding opportunities with park and trail improvements when they approved the \$40 Million Linn County Water and Land Legacy Bond issue in 2016. With 74% approval, voters made their voices heard in showing support for water quality initiatives for watersheds, updating and improving parks, and connecting communities with a vibrant trail system. The Conservation Board passed a resolution indicating that 55% of the bond funding would be designated for water quality and land protection, 30% toward park improvements, and 15% for trails.

It has now been approximately five years since the first bonds were sold, so I want to update you as to what has happened since then.

### INITIAL STEPS

Soon after approval by voters, Conservation Department staff hosted several project planning meetings with various stakeholders, partners and community groups which later involved planning, design and engineering work. The Linn County Conservation Board is also guided by the 2015 approved county park master plans. The goal has always been to maximize the return on these long-term investments.

>> [Learn more on page 2](#)



## Water Quality and Land Protection

27 targeted projects • 18 completed

Bond funding = \$8,124,000

Total project cost/estimate = \$11,479,000

## Park Improvement

15 targeted projects • 7 completed

Bond funding = \$5,835,000

Total project cost/estimate = \$10,190,000

## Trails

12 targeted projects • 7 completed

Bond funding = \$3,199,000

Total project cost/estimate = \$10,630,000

Pollinator Plantings



## Bonds Helping

(continued from front page)

The Linn County Board of Supervisors established the Linn County Water and Land Legacy Bond Public Review Board, to assure that Board approved projects meet the ballot language voters approved. After a year of work on project planning, the Linn County Board of Supervisors sold the first bonds to help leverage funding for 18 initial projects. To date, nearly 50 projects have been started or completed for a total of \$17 million in bond funds used towards over 40 in projects in Linn County.



# HIGHLIGHTS

## Some of the highlights include:

**Wickiup Hill wetland restoration and enhancement:**

Existing wetland was excavated to remove siltation and invasive species while preserving native plants. Rock check dam stops sedimentation into the wetland.

**Pinicon Ridge Park dam modification engineering, design, and implementation:** Modifying the dam allows for fish and mussel passage and environmental stream connectivity. Additionally, the modification will allow for recreational passage of paddle sport watercraft. Work will typically take place in the winter during low water levels. This project begins in December of 2022.

**Wanatee and Pinicon Ridge Park natural resources management plan and best practices:** The goal is to prioritize and achieve the highest impact regarding conservation of the ecosystem and health of watershed. Projects so far have included stream bank stabilization along Wanatee Creek, and addressing sloping, drainage, and various safety issues in public woodland sections of Pinicon Ridge Park.

**Cedar Valley Nature Trail:** A series of projects has allowed the paved section of the Cedar Valley Trail to Urbana. The next phase will include paving the remaining segment in cooperation with the Black Hawk County Conservation Board.

**Morgan Creek Park redevelopment:** South side of the park has expanded to include a large inclusive playground, open-aided shelter, picnic areas, accessible restrooms, walking paths, and trail development.

**Numerous wetland projects:** These projects on Linn County Conservation managed properties include new and/or enhanced wetlands and oxbow restorations, all to help water quality efforts while improving wildlife habitat.

**Pollinator plantings:** Working in partnership with the Monarch Research Project, over 1,000 acres of pollinator habitat has been planted within Linn County.

**Land acquisitions:** Property has been added primarily as additions to existing park areas.

**Playscape at Wickiup Hill Learning Center:** This natural playscape provides an opportunity for children to have fun while learning and being creative in an outdoor setting.

**Morgan Creek Trail:** This trail was extended through Morgan Creek Park. Eventually, the trail will cross the Cedar River to the north, further connecting to the city of Cedar Rapids trail system.



**LEARN MORE** about these, and all projects utilizing bond funds by checking out the Linn County Water and Land Legacy webpage at [LinnCountyIowa.gov/Conservation](http://LinnCountyIowa.gov/Conservation)

### Linn County Water and Land Legacy Ballot

"Shall the County of Linn, State of Iowa, issue its general obligation bonds in an amount not exceeding forty million dollars for the purposes of protecting sources of drinking water and the water quality of rivers and streams, including the Cedar River and its tributaries; protecting and acquiring land to provide natural floodwater storage, improve water quality, protect natural areas and reduce flooding; providing funds to improve parks; providing biking and walking trails; and protecting wildlife habitat and natural areas, to be managed by the Linn County Conservation Board, with full public disclosure of all expenditures?" \*

\*74% approval, November 8, 2016



Buffalo Creek Park preliminary plan

# Increased Demand Leads to Campground Expansion Plans

The enjoyment of camping at our Linn County Conservation areas has flourished throughout the years. Creating more opportunities for camping was identified in recent master plans. National Recreation and Parks Association research shows aggressive growth nationwide for campers with spikes of first timers and diversity of campers, especially since COVID-19. Linn County Conservation has also observed these trends.

## BUFFALO CREEK PARK

This 128-acre park, located just west of Coggon in northern Linn County, was first developed in 1962. Planned upgrades include a new playground and reservable open-aided shelter. The Conservation Board acquired 15 acres of land west of the current 13-site campground which will allow for the creation of 19 additional campsites. A new shower house and restroom facility is also planned for this campground. The goal is to complete improvements prior to the 2024 recreation season.

## PINICON RIDGE PARK

Campers heavily populate the Plains and Flying Squirrel Campgrounds located within the 966-acre Pinicon Ridge Park during the warm recreation season. A new shower house and a few more campsites with electricity have been added to Plains Campground. A new playground will be ready for use in 2023.

Tentative plans are being developed for a new campground in coming years. A new road will be created at the Pinicon Ridge Park north access leading to a new campground south of the ranger residence. This campground will feature about 35 sites with water and electric and perhaps a few sewer sites. In addition, three group camp areas will be created as well as some primitive pack-in sites. A shower house with restrooms and a small playground is included in this concept. Two new camping cabins will be constructed to accommodate larger families than the current 4-6 capacity that are currently available within the park. The first phase of this project will be preparing the campground area this fall.



# Every Camper has a Story

Ask any camper... and expect a different explanation for their interest in camping: connect with nature, get away from the hustle and bustle of a larger area, a chance to escape from devices, develop life skills and relationship...shall we keep going? Linn County Conservation is proud to continue the generational tradition of providing quality campgrounds for residents and visitors to the community.

## WINTER CAMPING

If you're interested in camping during colder weather, several primitive sites are available for use. These sites do not have electricity or water.

- **Matsell Bridge Primitive Campgrounds** is located in the 3700 block of Matsell Park Road near Stone City with 15 campsites.
- **Wakpicada Natural Area** is tucked behind the Linn County Fairgrounds in Central City, with eight campsites available. Roads may be closed during inclement conditions.
- **Wickiup Hill Learning Center** has a pack-in, reservation only camp site, suitable for groups.

Modern campgrounds at Buffalo Creek Park, Morgan Creek Park, Pinicon Ridge Park, and Wanatee Park are open April 15 – October 15. Favorable weather may lead to a slightly earlier start or end date. Mt Hope within the Matsell Bridge Natural Area closes October 15 and Matsell Bridge Equestrian Campground closes November 15.



Visit the Camping page at [LinnCountyIowa.gov/Conservation](https://linncountyia.gov/conservation) for more information



Wickiup Hill Learning Center pack-in campsite

## Outdoor Experience

*(continued from front page)*

Throughout the program, students explored different concepts and views of wilderness and were encouraged to develop their own definitions and relationship with the land. One of the major activities included trail improvement along the continental divide to help mitigate water erosion. Informal lessons and mentoring educated these future leaders about the natural and human history of the land and led to valuable outdoor skills. Everyone learned a lot, including the trek leaders.

Through a fun, supportive atmosphere and structured risk-taking, students became more independent and responsible, learning to trust themselves and others. The Wilderness Trek centers on four pillars:

- Stewardship
- Study of Wilderness
- Environmental Science
- Outdoor Skills

Opportunities of this magnitude are rare for students in Iowa. Without programs like this that target and engage today's youth in diverse outdoor experiences, we can expect decreased interest in conserving and preserving our wild open spaces and public lands.

Thanks to local contributions from the NATOPA-KAMA Bittersweet foundation, SOKO Outfitters, and help from the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation, Linn County Conservation was able to break down barriers and offer this opportunity free of charge to students living in Linn County. The program was an overwhelming success and preparations are being made for the next class in 2023.



Wickiup Hill Learning Center pack-in campsite





# We got a little nutty at Wanatee Park!



Linn County forests sustained significant damage from the 2020 derecho with over 70 percent of the tree canopy lost in some areas. This included some large sections at Wanatee Park near Marion. Earlier this spring, a 15-acre area was cleared of the debris and soon became the recipient of new hardwood trees. We supplemented this planting in late November with acorns and hickory nuts, as they too can grow to be trees.

In August and September, we asked the community to donate their fallen acorns to us. We had more than enough with a nice mix of oak varieties. Along with Conservation staff, volunteers helped us with the planting. It was pretty simple, really. Strapped with a canvas bag, the tree planter simply poked a hole in the ground with a stick, dropped in a nut, and stepped on it.

The terrain was a bit rough, the weather a bit chilly, but it was a great opportunity to eventually increase the density of trees in this woodland. We realize that only a small percentage of these nuts and acorns will actually grow to be trees, but with a little luck and some good weather, they will help complement this native forest area for years to come.



## Iowa DNR grant helps provide trees for Morgan Creek Park

New native trees have been added to Morgan Creek Park, thanks to a state grant. "The Iowa Department of Natural Resources awarded Emerald Ash Borer Reforestation and Derecho Recovery funds for new trees," said Andrew Huck, Linn County Conservation Ecologist and Land Management Specialist. "We were pleased to receive a tremendous variety of native trees within this park and get them planted before winter." 68 new potted trees were added not only to derecho impacted sections, but also to the new redevelopment area, along the trails, and the arboretum on the north side.





Grant Wood Trail at Hindman Road



Woodland trails within Wanatee Park

# Connecting our Communities

## Trail Construction Update

The spring, summer, and early fall makes for the best time to enjoy the variety of multi-use trails within Linn County. Unfortunately, it is also the best time for construction and maintenance of these areas, as we continue to make strides in connecting our communities to provide access for all with the multi-use trail system within our county.

- › A nearly 3-mile trail segment along the Grant Wood Trail from Waldo's Rock Park to Oxley Road was completed this summer. This provides a contiguous connection into Marion. The Linn County Trails Association donated the Grant Wood Trail to Linn County Conservation in 2005 for future development.
- › The Cedar Valley Nature Trail (Hoover section) north of 76th street just south of Cedar Rapids received drainage improvements which included an asphalt overlay on a small section.

**A public input meeting in Springville was held to gauge interest on a possible trail connection into Springville from the Grant Wood Trail. The meeting was an open-house format with possible scenarios. No decisions have been made as information taken from the meeting will be used for ongoing studies.**

- › A sealant was applied to the Cedar Valley Nature Trail south of Center Point to prolong the life of the trail. This type of maintenance usually takes place once every five years along various segments.
- › Construction began last fall on the Wapsi Bluff Trail in Pinicon Ridge Park, which provides a path through the park down to the Riverside area near the playground, shelter, and picnic areas along the river.
- › Following debris removal and completion of salvage harvest at Wanatee park, several miles of trail within the woodland area have been repaired.



# Off-leash Area Added to Morgan Creek Park

...but don't forget to leash your pet in other park areas



Morgan Creek Park visitors experienced an enjoyable summer in the new redevelopment area, located just east of Highway 100 north at E Ave. The latest addition occurred late summer when a new off-leash area was opened. A bridge was installed over Morgan Creek just west of the first parking lot as you enter the park (new entrance is 7212 E Ave. NW, Cedar Rapids). This 40-acre section features an open play area as well as trails throughout the prairie. Although a leash is not required in this section, owners are still responsible for their pet (and don't forget to re-leash when returning to other areas of the park, as required).



## Other Designated Off-Leash Linn County Conservation Park Areas:

- Buffalo Creek Park: trail north of the campground
- Pinicon Ridge Park: on the island west of Watercraft Concession
- Wanatee Park: west of Red Cedar Lodge

## "Why does my cute, harmless dog need a leash?"

Except in the designated off-leash areas, Linn County Conservation follows the State Park regulation Animals on Leash to protect all park users and their pets, as well as native animals and habitat\*. Quite simply, leash laws are in effect for the safety of your dog and those around them. Your feelings toward your pet may not be universal with other pets and park patrons. Not only could you receive a citation, but perhaps face additional legal consequences for failure to control your dog. Discourteous dog owners often cause others to lose the privilege of taking their dogs to places they formerly could in public areas.

## ...And bag that poo and take it with you!

Dog waste along our public trails and park areas sticks around for a long time. One primary reason to remove it is it can spread disease. Another obvious reason...it's kind of gross! Linn County Conservation areas observe a **carry-in, carry-out** policy, which means whatever you take into the park with you, take out with you and dispose of at home. Significant maintenance savings occurs when patrons take care of their own litter, which is why you rarely see a garbage can at a Linn County park.

\*For more information, see 461A.45 **Animals on Leash** and Section 6 **Training and Exercising Dogs** of Linn County Park Rules of Rules and Regulations. Visit **Policies & Fees** at [LinnCountyIowa.gov/Conservation](http://LinnCountyIowa.gov/Conservation).





# After all is **sled** and done, there's **snow** place like Linn County Parks in the winter!

## **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING**

Trails for cross-country skiing are in Matsell Bridge Natural Area, Morgan Creek Park, Wanatee Park, and the Wickiup Hill Learning Center. Trails are not typically groomed immediately after a snow event. 4" of snow that is not wet or heavy is usually required for our equipment to be able to roll and/or groom trails. Hikers, horses (where allowed), and dogs are encouraged to stay off the intended Nordic ski track.

## **SLEDDING**

The area next to Red Cedar Lodge at Wanatee Park and a hill by Woodpecker Lodge at Pinicon Ridge Park have been popular for sledding during the winter months.

## **ICE FISHING**

Ice fishing opportunities are abundant along the Wapsipinicon and Cedar rivers. Only venture on ice more than 4" thick.



Sure, it's tempting to stay all cozy inside your home, but our bodies and especially our minds still need to get outside for daily doses of fresh air. When seasons change, you can be inspired to experience new opportunities in the outdoors. The research tell us you will experience enhanced brain function and creativity with a variety of activities and projects. Enjoy the physical and mental health benefits that Linn County parks have to offer during the cold weather season.

Enjoy hiking, snowshoeing, wildlife watching, photography, and much more during the colder months of the year. Remember to dress in layers for the weather, wear bright colors, and keep hydrated. Most Linn County Conservation outdoor areas are open sunrise to sunset. However, plan accordingly. Only vault restrooms are open throughout the winter. Many of our newer restrooms, such as a new one at Morgan Creek Park, are closed during the winter to protect the water pipes.





Ash trees removed  
from park road

# Emerald Ash Borer infestation taking its toll within Wanatee Park

The Linn County Conservation Board approved removal of 100 large ash trees along Big Bluestem Drive within Wanatee Park due to infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). "Emerald Ash Borer was discovered in Linn County in 2015," said Dana Kellogg, Natural Resource Manager. "In recent years, they've infected trees in our public areas and many are now in severe decline or dying. The dead ash trees along roads or near public amenities additionally pose a significant threat to public safety if not removed," said Kellogg.

EAB is a small, metallic-green invasive wood-boring beetle native to east Asia that attacks ash trees. According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, EAB was first discovered in North America in Michigan in 2002 and spread to Iowa in 2010. Ash trees provided a tree

canopy along the Wanatee Park entrance road when planted in the 1960's, prior to any knowledge of EAB. Once EAB was discovered in Iowa, Linn County Conservation staff planted a variety of trees on the back slopes near the existing ash trees knowing the devastating effects from these pests could occur in the future.

Removing the ash trees vs. insecticide treatment alternatives for each tree is the most cost-effective solution and provides the safest, long-term environmental impact within the park. "For several years now, any new tree planting efforts within our system involves a variety of species, which improves the biodiversity of our areas and making them more resistant to disease and pest infestations." The Linn County Conservation Board awarded Bill Miller Logging the clearing contract with the low bid of \$20,000.







# WINTER PROGRAMS

Programs and events are held at the Wickiup Hill Learning Center unless stated otherwise

10260 Morris Hills Road  
Toddville, IA  
(319) 892-6485  
[conservation@linncountyiowa.gov](mailto:conservation@linncountyiowa.gov)



**REGISTRATION REQUIRED.** Events/class sizes are limited.

Visit [LinnCountyIowa.gov/Conservation](http://LinnCountyIowa.gov/Conservation) and click on EVENTS to learn more and to register.

Check out our events page often for additional programs!

## DECEMBER

### Science for Squirts: The Snowy Nap

**Tuesday, December 13, 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m.**

Children enjoy a story and activities based on the monthly theme. This month we will read *The Snowy Nap*, by Jan Brett and talk about furry animals in Iowa. Ages 3-6, but younger and older siblings are welcome. Cost: \$3/child.



### Deck the Trails

**Saturday, December 17, 10-11 a.m.**



Let's get extra festive this year and add some holiday cheer to our trails at Wickiup! We will make tree cookie and twig ornaments: some to keep and some to hang in our trees at Wickiup. Sip some hot chocolate, listen to

music, and enjoy some creative time with others. We provide materials. For all ages. Cost: \$5/person.

### Solstice Ramble

**Wednesday, December 21, 5:30-7 p.m.**

Whether you think of it as the shortest day of the year or the longest night, the solstice is always a turning point towards the new season. We will walk the trails with the thoughts of the past year and the promise of the New Year ahead of us. This pivotal day always is a time of reflection and of potential. If you wish to bring along a note saying goodbye to the past year or hello to the new one, we will gather briefly at a campfire to cast off those thoughts.



## JANUARY

### Paddlefest

**Saturday, January 7, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.**

CrawDaddy Outdoors is hosting a Paddle Fest at The W at Wartburg College in Waverly, which includes Linn County Conservation presentations on kayaking. This one-day event is dedicated to education, stories, and includes breakout sessions and vendor booths for paddlers and river activists. For more info, visit [crawdaddyoutdoors.com](http://crawdaddyoutdoors.com) as more details are released closer to the event.



## **Turtle Meet and Greet**

**Saturday, January 7, 10-11 a.m.**

Come out and meet a couple of our turtles that call Wickiup home. Meet the famous Speedy Petey, the shoe chasing box turtle! Stay after and head out to Wickiup's Wandering Woods for some play time. Aimed at elementary/middle school aged families. All are welcome. No cost.

## **Science for Squirts: Penguin Day**

**Wednesday, January 18, 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m.**

Children enjoy a story and activities based on the monthly theme. Do penguins live in Iowa? Would they like it here? Find out! Ages 3-6, but younger and older siblings are welcome. Cost: \$3/child.



## **Kid's Ice Fishing Clinic**

**Pinicon Ridge Park,  
Central City**

**Saturday, January 14,  
9:30-11 a.m.**

Bring the kids to the backwater area of Pinicon Ridge Park to learn the fine points of ice fishing. Participants will practice jigging with an ice fishing rod, learn how a depth finder works, and attempt to view fish from an ice shack.

Sponsored with the North Linn Fish and Game Club. Program is free, but don't forget to register.

## **Walk in the Park Series: Almost New Moon Owl Walk**

**Pinicon Ridge Park, Central City**

**Eagle View Shelter, 1864 Horseshoe Falls Rd.  
Wednesday, January 18, 6-7:30 PM**

Something mysterious happens when the leaves drop off the trees. We are presented with wider views of the landscape around us. At night, our senses are accentuated, so we may hear night sounds, smell the frost, crunch through the latest snow, or perhaps we'll see different wildlife. Owls are amazing and interesting. We will learn a bit more about these nocturnal creatures before wandering down the trails to try to call one in to visit with us. Cost \$2/child, \$5/adult.



## **Campfire and S'mores**

**Thursday, January 19, 4-5 p.m.**



Join us for a campfire gathering with s'more fixings and activities near the Wickiup Wandering Wood's nature playscape. No cost for the program but remember to register so there are enough s'mores for everyone!

## **Take a Walk on the WILD Side Series: Matsell Bridge Natural Area, Red Oak Trail**

**Parking lot at 3716 Matsell Park Rd,  
Central City**

**Wednesday, January 25, 4:30-6 p.m.**

We will wander the trail on a late afternoon near the Wapsipinicon River through lovely oaks and woodland forest to see, hear and smell what winter brings us. There are always many wonders to enjoy as we immerse ourselves in woods amidst this winter season. Expect to experience a variety of flora and fauna along the way. We will share an impressive view of the river from the bluff above it. Red Oak Trail is 1.25 miles and is used to access the year round Red Oak Cabin. This trail starts near the Matsell Bridge Shooting Range and traverses upland red oak woodlands. Cost: \$2/children 16 and under, \$5/adult.



## **Science for Squirts: Here Comes Jack Frost**

**January 26, 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m.**

Children enjoy a story and activities based on the monthly theme. We will experiment with ice and snow this month and learn how Jack Frost makes his appearance. Ages 3-6, but younger and older siblings are welcome. Cost: \$3/child.



## FEBRUARY

### Owl Hike and Call Building

**Wednesday, February 1, 5:30-7:30 p.m.**

"Who cooks for you?" asks the barred owl. We will learn about owls in Iowa initially and participants will build owl calls to take home after the event. We then head out onto the trails to talk to the owls and attempt to call one in. Cost is \$2/children 16 and under and \$5/adult which includes one call. Additional calls can be made for \$5 each. Registration required by **January 26** so we have enough calls prepared.



### Science for Squirts: Groundhog Day

**Thursday, February 2, 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m.**

Children enjoy a story and activities based on the monthly theme. Why do we have a day all about groundhogs? Do they really predict the weather? Find out! Ages 3-6, but younger and older siblings are welcome. Cost: \$3/child.

### Science for Squirts: Wildlife Conservationist Day

**Tuesday, February 7, 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m.**

Children enjoy a story and activities based on the monthly theme. It's never too early to encourage kids to think about conservation and we've got some tips to get them started! Ages 3-6, but younger and older siblings are welcome. Cost: \$3/child.

### Snake Meet and Greet – Family Edition

**Saturday, February 11, 10-11 a.m.**

Come out and meet a couple of our snakes that call Wickiup home. If you have never felt a snake, you'll have your chance. Stay after and slither out to Wickiup's Wandering Woods nature playscape for some play time. Aimed at elementary/middle school aged families. All are welcome. No cost, but don't forget to register.

### Science for Squirts: Valentine Prints

**Tuesday, February 14, 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m.**

Children enjoy a story and activities based on the monthly theme. Let's compare animal tracks and see which ones look like hearts. Ages 3-6, but younger and older siblings are welcome. Cost: \$3/child.

### Just a Walk in a Park Series: Night Hike – Wanatee Park

**Red Cedar Lodge, 1700 Big Bluestem Drive, Marion**

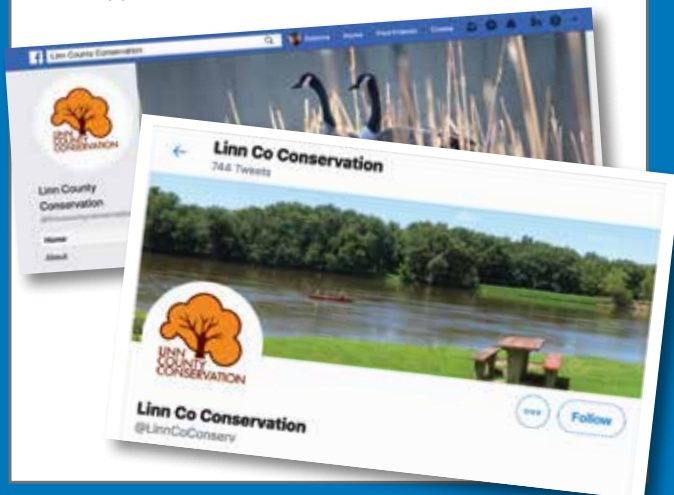
**Wednesday, February 15, 6-7:30 p.m.**

Join us in the lower parking lot area at Red Cedar Lodge to begin our hike. We will learn about some of the things that go bump in the night. A few activities will show how our eyes function in the dark and discussions will cover various strategies our wildlife use to make their way around at night. Cost: \$2/children 16 and under or \$5/ adult.

*(continued on page 15)*

## FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

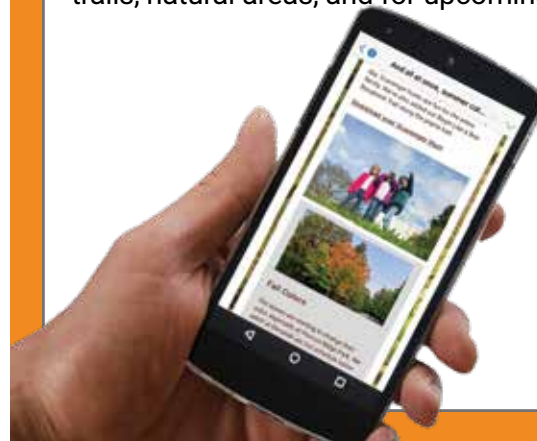
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Just type ENEWS in subject line.

Our Linn County Conservation eNews blasts occur throughout the month, keeping you up to date on all the happenings in our parks, trails, natural areas, and for upcoming events.



# Class is in Session!

## Eco-Explorers



The Eco-Explorer programs foster compassion, curiosity, and trust with the natural world by giving participants space and time to fall in love with the outdoors. Activities may include exploring, outdoor skills, animal tracking, nature and sensory awareness, storytelling, plant and animal study, empowerment, and lots of fun and play! This is a drop-off program that encourages independence from the caregiver. We will meet out front by the kiosk near the parking lot at the Wickiup Hill Learning Center prior to the program for easy drop-off. Ages 5-8. Cost \$10/child. Sessions are held 10-11:30 a.m. and 1-2:30 p.m. Don't forget to register for your appropriate date and time.

December 21 | January 11 | January 24 | February 15 | February 2 | March 2 | March 8

## Kayak Practice – Pool time!

### Bender Pool in Cedar Rapids

A pool is a great place during the winter to practice and refine skills for the open water season. In partnership with the City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation, drop-in pool sessions for kayakers are being offered from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Swimwear and a lifejacket is required. A helmet is required for those practicing rolls. Minimum age is 10 years. Youth must be supervised by an adult. Cost: \$10/person at the door. Sessions will be held December 11; January 8 and 22, February 5 and 19, and March 5.



## Fishing Rod Building Class

Build a fishing rod to your specifications! Classes are February 21 and 22 from 6-9 p.m. and on February 25 from 1-5:30 p.m. at the Wickiup Hill Learning Center. Custom rod builder Chuck Ungs from Linn County Conservation will lead through the process of building a Rainshadow or another brand of spinning rod. When



finished with these classes, you will have the knowledge to move on to other rod-building projects. Cost depends on the model of fishing rod blank and options selected. Registration fee of \$10 reserves your spot in the classes. An additional check will be needed to cover the course and basic materials (\$90 plus cost for chosen components), the rod blank and any additional components will add to the final cost. Registration is by phone by calling Chuck at 319-892-6485. Call to discuss the best blank to suit your needs and to determine the final class cost.

**Registration deadline is 12 p.m. on January 6.**





## Science for Squirts: Polar Bear Day

**Monday, February 27, 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m.**

Children enjoy a story and activities based on the monthly theme. This might be your only chance to touch a real-life polar bear fur! Ages 3-6, but younger and older siblings are welcome. Cost: \$3/child.

## MARCH

### Hunter Education Class Series

**Tuesday-Thursday, March 7, 8 and 9, 6:30-10 p.m.**

This hunter education program led by Conservation staff introduces students to several life-long skills important for many different types of outdoor recreational opportunities. If you want to obtain an Iowa hunting license and you were born after January 1, 1972, it is mandatory to complete hunter education training once you reach the age of 16. Attendance at all classes is necessary to receive certification. To register for this training, go to the Hunter Education section at [IowaDNR.gov](http://IowaDNR.gov). No cost.

### South San Juan Trek Presentation

**Monday, March 13, 6:30 p.m.**

Join us for a presentation about the 2023 South San Juan Wilderness Trek, a two-week backpacking trip for high school students that develops outdoor leadership and recreation skills. This presentation is open to anyone interested and will include an information session followed by time for questions. No need to register.

### Science for Squirts: The Adventures of Mossy the Box Turtle

**Tuesday, March 7, 10-11 a.m. or 1-2 p.m.**

Children enjoy a story and activities based on the monthly theme. Meet our friendly box turtles and help us give them a bath! Ages 3-6, but younger and older siblings are welcome. Cost: \$3/child.

### Paddles in the Pool

**Sunday, March 26, 12-3 p.m., Bender Pool, Cedar Rapids**

This course should whet your appetite for the upcoming open water season covering kayak safety, personal floatation devices (PFD's), strokes, entering and exiting kayaks and much more, as you immerse yourself with information and some paddling experience in the pool. This is designed for the beginning boater to gain some knowledge and confidence. Bring your own boat if you can, or let us know and we may be able to accommodate. Registration is through Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation. \$10/person and open to ages 10 and up.

## Board & Staff

### Conservation Board

Hillary Hughes, President  
Steve Emerson, Vice-President  
Cindy Burke, Secretary  
Brent Oleson, Member  
George Kanz, Member

### Administration

Dennis Goemaat, Executive Director  
Daniel Gibbins, Deputy Director  
Randy Burke, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Ted Doscher, Project Planner  
Ryan Schlader, Community Outreach Specialist  
John Layton, Senior Account Clerk  
Meredith Glynn, Office Coordinator  
Deanna Donovan, Senior Clerk Typist (part-time)

### Conservation Education (Naturalists) at Wickiup Hill Learning Center

Kent Rector, Nature Center Manager  
Chuck Unga, Conservation Education Specialist  
Sarah Wendt, Conservation Education Specialist

### Natural Resources Unit

Dana Kellogg, Natural Resources Manager  
Tony Nemmers, Natural Resources Specialist  
Andrew Huck, Conservation Ecologist  
and Land Protection Specialist  
Josh Volz, Resource Technician  
Landon Barnes, Resource Technician\*

### Services Unit

Chuck Bogard, Operations Manager  
Tom Oberbreckling, Construction Coordinator  
Dave Kephart, Carpenter  
Tom Blythe, Mechanic  
Tony Aarhus, Heavy Equipment Operator  
Thomas Eiben, Heavy Equipment Operator  
Bill Perrin, Operations Technician

### North Cedar District

Shaun Reilly, Resource Manager  
(Park Ranger, Morgan Creek Park)  
Josh Fossum, Assistant Resource Manager  
Jared VanHamme, Resource Technician  
Shawn McDonald, Resource Technician  
Ella Huff, Resource Technician

### South Cedar District

Jason Baumann, Resource Manager  
(Park Ranger, Wanatee Park)  
Joe Reu, Assistant Resource Manager  
Chris Burian, Resource Technician

### Wapsipinicon District

Aaron Batchelder, Resource Manager  
(Park Ranger, Pinicon Ridge Park)  
Steve Deaver, Assistant Resource Manager  
Nathan Allen, Resource Technician  
Noah Krob, Resource Technician  
Nick Haight, Resource Technician

*In addition, Linn County Conservation hires seasonal employees, primarily during the warm recreation season.*

*\*position shared with South Cedar District*



Linn County Conservation  
Department  
10260 Morris Hills Rd  
Toddville, Iowa 52341  
Phone (319) 892-6450



Nonprofit Organization  
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Center Point, Iowa  
Permit No. 4

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## WICKIUP HILL LEARNING CENTER WINTER HOURS

*The Wickiup Hill Learning Center is closed  
on Sundays from November through March*

### BUILDING HOURS

Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Sunday Closed\*

Closed on Holidays

\*April through October, open Sunday 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

**OUTDOOR AREAS OPEN  
SUNRISE TO SUNSET**

